

## Managing AWOL Employees

There are times when employees go AWOL. They just disappear. You expect them to turn up for a shift and they don't arrive. In this post we'll look at how you should manage AWOL employees. We also have a checklist that you can download and use if you find yourself in this situation.

### The AWOL Employee – What Do I Do First?

The first thing you need to do is try to make contact with the employee. Whilst you may think they've just decided they don't want to work for you anymore, there may be another reason that they haven't turned up. You have a duty of care towards employees so the first thing to do is make sure they are OK.

You should call the contact number you have for them and leave a message. In that message, confirm that, if you don't hear from them within the next 24 hours, you'll make contact with their emergency contact. If the contact number you have is a mobile number then you should text them the same message.

Take a screenshot of that message so that, if you need to, you can demonstrate that you made efforts to contact the employee.

One area this does highlight is the need to make sure that you have both contact details and emergency contact details for all your employees. It's worth sending around a personal contact form once a year to make sure you always hold up-to-date information.

### No Response from the Employee, What Next?

If you don't hear from the employee within 24 hours, try to reach their emergency contact. Explain to that individual that you are calling on behalf of your company and that X hasn't arrived for work. Explain that you are concerned for their well-being and ask whether the emergency contact has heard from them at all. If they have, explain that it's important that X contact you as soon as possible and ask the emergency contact to pass on your message.

If the emergency contact has not heard from X then ask them to see if they are able to reach them and to then provide you with an update. If the emergency contact is also unable to reach the employee, then it may be time to involve the police with a "concern for welfare".

## No Response from the Emergency Contact, What Next?

There are times when you can't reach the emergency contact and then you need to decide what to do next. From a safety and well-being perspective, you need to consider whether you should contact the police. This will really depend on the situation. If the employee had turned up and worked a shift or two, had been clearly not enjoying it or disengaged, you may conclude that they have just decided the role isn't for them. In that circumstance, you may feel that contacting the police is overkill.

However, if the employee has been working with you for a while, has always been reliable and then suddenly doesn't arrive, it would likely be sensible to give the police a call.

There's no right or wrong here but it's probably best to be cautious and give the police a call if you can't contact an employee.

## What About from an Employment Perspective?

Beyond the safety and well-being element, there's an employment aspect that you need to consider and manage.

Having tried to reach the employee with no success, the next thing to do is to write to the employee. You should write and set out the date and time that they were expected at work and detail the efforts that you have made to reach them. Then confirm the date and time that they are next due to work and explain that, should they not arrive for this shift or notify you for the reason for absence before this shift then you will assume that they have resigned and will terminate their employment. If their next shift is the following day then you may want to set a date in the future where you'll assume they resigned. As an example, if you're writing to them on Monday and they are due to work on Tuesday, you may say that if you don't hear from them by Thursday then you will terminate their employment.

This letter should be sent via both email and hard copy post if possible.

You'll either then hear from them or you won't. Do continue to call and leave a message and send a text each day. Just once a day is sufficient.

If you don't hear from them, you send a second letter confirming that you have not been able to reach the employee despite repeated attempts and you are therefore concluding that they have resigned from their position. Confirm that you are bringing employment to an end and that they will be paid up to the last date on which they attended work. Even though the employee has resigned by not attending work, do still give them the right to appeal the decision to bring employment to an end.

## Is There Anything Else I Should Consider?

Through this process, the employee may very well make an appearance. In this scenario, you need to decide what to do.

Failing to attend work without notice will usually be something that you would address through your disciplinary process. Of course, be reasonable. If it turns out that the employee had been in an accident and was unable to let you know what was happening, starting a disciplinary process would seem harsh! Listen to the reasons the employee gives for having gone AWOL and determine what an appropriate course of action would be.

## Additional Help

In addition to this guidance, included in this pack is the process chart and checklist to support with managing AWOL employees, as well as template letters for you<sup>1</sup>.

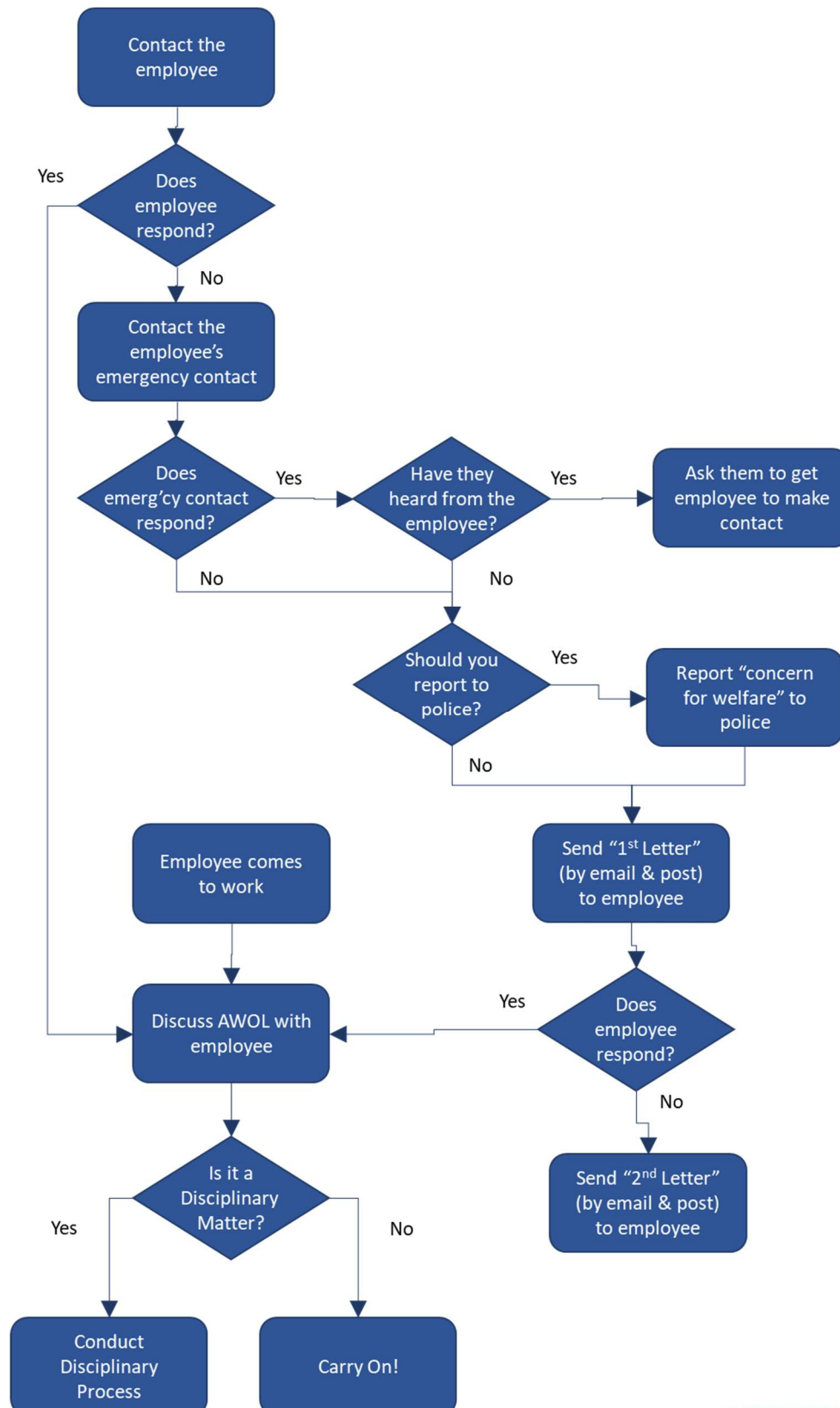
Please note, these documents are guides only and do not constitute professional advice. If you are managing an AWOL employee and would like advice on your particular situation, we're here for you.

You can contact us on 0203 146 8770. Alternatively, you can complete our contact form and we'll be in touch.

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## Process for Managing AWOL Employees.



# Form for Managing AWOL Employees.

## Details

<b>EMPLOYEE'S NAME:</b>	
<b>LINE MANAGER:</b>	
<b>FIRST DAY OF ABSENCE:</b>	
<b>EMPLOYEE'S CONTACT NUMBER:</b>	
<b>EMPLOYEE'S PERSONAL EMAIL ADDRESS:</b>	
<b>NAME OF EMERGENCY CONTACT:</b>	
<b>CONTACT DETAILS FOR EMERGENCY CONTACT:</b>	

## Attempts To Contact Employee

<b>DATE AND TIME</b>	<b>NATURE OF CONTACT</b>
16th October – 10:00	Called mobile and left message
16th October – 10:02	Sent text message
etc	

## Attempts To Contact Emergency Contact

<b>DATE AND TIME</b>	<b>NATURE OF CONTACT</b>
17th October – 10:00	Called mobile and left message
17th October – 10:02	Sent text message
etc	

## Letter Log

LETTER TYPE	DATE SENT
<b>Letter 1</b> Confirmation that failure to arrive for work or make contact will lead to termination	
<b>Letter 2</b> Confirmation of end of employment	

## Comments/Notes

**USE THIS SECTION TO MAKE RELEVANT NOTES INC. DETAILS OF ANY CONTACT YOU HAVE WITH THE POLICE.**

## LETTER TEMPLATE 1

*Send this letter after you've attempted to reach the employee without success. This is a template and will need to be updated based on your situation.*

DATE

NAME

ADDRESS 1

ADDRESS 2

ADDRESS 2

POSTCODE

Dear NAME,

**SUBJECT: Failure to attend work**

We have been trying to reach you as we were expecting you to arrive for work on **DATE** but you did not. As far as we are aware, you have not made contact with your line manager or any other manager and you do not appear to have any annual leave booked. Therefore, you are currently on unauthorised leave.

**SET OUT WHAT ATTEMPTS YOU HAVE MADE TO CONTACT THE INDIVIDUAL. EXAMPLE:** *We tried to reach you via the mobile phone number we have on record for you. We left you voice mail messages on DATE and DATE and also sent you text messages and emails on the same dates. Our attempts to contact you have been unsuccessful. We were concerned for your welfare so we have also made attempts to contact your emergency contact. This was successful and we asked that they request that you contact us but we have still not heard from you. We do hope that you are safe and well.*

We are expecting you to attend work on **DATE** and we will continue to make attempts to reach you. I do need to make you aware that, should you fail to make contact with us and fail to arrive for work as planned, we will have no alternative but to conclude that you have decided not to return to work and we will bring your employment with **COMPANY** to an end.

We hope to hear from you soon.

## LETTER TEMPLATE 2

*Send this letter if you do not receive any contact from the employee after making multiple attempts and sending letter 1. This is a template and will need to be updated based on your situation.*

DATE

NAME

ADDRESS 1

ADDRESS 2

ADDRESS 2

POSTCODE

Dear NAME,

SUBJECT: Termination of employment

I am writing further to our letter sent to you via email and via post on DATE.

We have had no contact from you since DATE despite repeated efforts on our part to reach you. SET OUT WHAT ATTEMPTS YOU HAVE MADE TO CONTACT THE INDIVIDUAL. EXAMPLE: *Since sending our letter on DATE, we have left you a further X voicemails, sent Y text messages and also tried to reach you via email. We have not received any response to any of our messages.*

You have now been absent from work since DATE and failed to make any contact with us. This is a serious breach of company policy.

In our letter to you dated DATE OF LETTER 1 we explained that, if you did not contact us by DATE we would have no alternative but to terminate your employment. Given that we have not heard from you, I am writing to confirm that your employment has been terminated on the grounds of a serious breach of company policy.

Your final day of employment was DATE WHEN LAST WORKED. Up to this date you will have accrued X days of annual leave which you have not taken and this will be paid to you.

Your final payment will be made to you on DATE and your P45 will be sent to you shortly after this date.

You can appeal this decision. If you would like to appeal you should write to EMAIL ADDRESS within 5 days of the date of receipt of this letter, stating the grounds for your appeal.